

status Report

The Quarterly Newsletter on
Disability Issues in Alberta

THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

NOVEMBER 2001

Famous Players Told to Shape Up

Famous Players has been ordered by the Ontario Human Rights Commission to make three Toronto theatres accessible to wheelchair users and pay damages to five individuals.

The Commission has given the movie chain between one and two years to make the improvements.

The ruling, handed down in September, found that Famous Players had clearly violated the rights of the five wheelchair users who filed complaints: Barbara Turnbull, Marilyn Chapman, Domenic Fragale, Ing Wong-Ward and Steven Macaulay. All



five will receive cash settlements ranging from \$8,000 to \$12,000.

"The Ontario Human Rights Code entitles persons with disabilities to equal access," said Chief Commissioner Keith Norton in a September 25th statement. "I am now calling upon Famous Players Theatres

to do what is right and that is to comply promptly with the order so that moviegoers with disabilities can enjoy these facilities along with everyone else."

In a media statement issued earlier in the month, Famous Players said it will "review and assess the economic implications of the recommendation to make theatres fully accessible within the prescribed time frame."

The company's statement went on to imply that the ruling may result in a closure of a theatre: "Older theatres remain economically challenged in today's market. It would be unfortunate if we had to accelerate the closing of either location based on the financial reality of the board's recommendations."

During the public hearing, Famous Players Theatres refused to provide any financial data, arguing that its ability to pay for the renovations was not an issue—a tactic which Norton bluntly criticized in his recent statement.

"If these expenses were a genuine issue causing undue hardship to Famous Players Theatres, the Board of Inquiry could have addressed the matter," said Norton. "Instead, the corporation attempted to try its case in the court of public opinion and in doing so, unfairly pitied the legitimate desire of those who want to protect heritage buildings against the rights of persons with disabilities."

The one year deadline applies to the Backstage Theatre on Balmuto Street, while a two year deadline applies to the Uptown Theatre, which is attached to the Backstage Theatre and hosts portions of the Toronto International Film Festival, and midtown's Eglinton Theatre.

Turnbull, who is a reporter for the *Toronto Star*, said she had mixed feelings about the decision. "Although some aspects are disappointing, it is, I believe, a big step in the right direction," Turnbull told the *Star* in its September 12th issue. "But I find it unfortunate that they (Famous Players) are trying to blame the closings of historical and popular theatres on us simply because we want the same options as people who don't use wheelchairs. That's all this has been about—giving us equal access."

In February 2000, a British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal ruled in favour of Vince Miele of Vancouver, and ordered the company to improve accessibility at its Capital Six theatre located on Granville Street.

Brain Injury Initiative Interim Advisory Council Appointed

Four Albertans have been appointed to an Interim Advisory Council to guide the strategic implementation of community support services for persons with acquired brain injury. Council Chair is former cabinet minister Connie Osterman of Carstairs, who is current Chair of the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Society. Other members include Hildegard Campsall of Peace River, former CEO of Peace River Health unit; Pat Marshall of Innisfail, who serves on the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Central Community Board; and Suzanne Vallally of Calgary, who has worked with brain injury survivors for more than 15 years.

"We looked for Albertans who have an active interest in acquired brain injury and experience with government systems or grassroots knowledge of community services," said Minister of Community Development Gene Zwodzesky. "I am delighted that these knowledgeable and busy people were able to commit their time and expertise to this council, and that they bring the perspectives of both urban and rural communities to the table."

With support from David Steeves, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Community Support Systems Division, and his staff, the council will assist in the development of criteria for program participation, allocation of funding across Alberta and implementation of regional operations.

The first meeting of the Interim Advisory Council took place on October 2, 2001, with subsequent meetings to be held at least quarterly. Council appointments are for up to two years, ending June 30, 2003.

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Council Update

The world has changed since September 11th. While the events of that day directly impacted citizens of the United States, I believe it's safe to say that every citizen of the world has or will feel the result.

For Albertans, this tragedy has provided us with a glimpse of how fortunate we are to live in our province, in our country. But it also reminds us that we have a role to play in ensuring the future of world peace.

The Council has also experienced its share of change in the past two months. Staff members Tony Hudson, Brian Sandilands, Carmen Grandmont and Sandi Kerr have moved on to new challenges. I would like to thank them for their efforts and wish them the best in future endeavours.

I'm also pleased to welcome incoming interim Executive Director Terry Keyko. Terry comes to us with an exemplary 25 year career with the Alberta Government. Terry started his career with the department of Social Services and Community Health working in a division called Services for the Handicapped. Since that time, he has been responsible for programs in the area of recreation and sport for persons with disabilities, the coordination of youth programs across the province during the International Year of Youth, the development and implementation of programs and policy in multiculturalism and diversity, and the management of provincial historic sites. Most recently, he was seconded in the spring of 2000 to take the position of Director of Operations with the World Championships in Athletics.

On behalf of Council, I have asked Terry to provide leadership and operational support in the day-to-day operations of the Council. This includes stabiliz-

ing the staffing, the overall office operations and our relationship with the Ministry of Community Development. Terry will also assist Council with completion of a number of projects such as the Alberta Disability Strategy, and will oversee an organizational review of the Premier's Council in view of the legislative mandate of the Council sun setting on December 31, 2003.

Meanwhile, Council members have almost completed their three year terms. They are working hard to complete their tasks—primarily a review and fine-tuning of the Alberta's Disability Strategy interim report based on the feedback we've received. I would like to commend Council for their diligence and commitment in completing the tasks they initiated. The crucial work begun by the current Council will be continued by the returning members. A process to appoint new members will be in place by year's end.

I believe the Council has an important mandate and wealth of opportunity to influence government direction. In fact, two positive announcements regarding policy affecting Albertans with disabilities testify to the importance of this Council. While these announcements are truly the result of a team effort across government and community, the Council made important contributions to each initiative.

First, on November 1st, a new Parking Placards for Persons with Disabilities policy was implemented. This policy, which results from two years of consultations with affected stakeholders, aims to ensure those with the greatest needs have better access to designated parking.

Groups and individuals representing persons with disabilities asked the policy be reviewed because those most needing desig-

nated parking often found the spaces used by those whose needs were questionable. The Alberta Advisory Committee on Barrier Free Transportation established a subcommittee to carefully review both Alberta's parking placards policy and policies in other jurisdictions. The advisory committee included representatives from disability groups, the provincial government, municipal governments and our Council.

The most critical component of the new policy is that a person must be unable to walk unassisted 50 metres (the previous policy used 200 metres as a yardstick). And, in addition to physicians, occupational therapists and physiotherapists will be able to approve application forms. Those renewing their placards or applying for the first time will have to use new forms and be subject to the new policy as of Nov. 1, 2001. Forms and information are available at any Alberta Registries agent. More information about the new policy for parking placards for persons with disabilities is available on Alberta Transportation's web site (www.trans.gov.ab.ca).

Second, a long-awaited legislative review of the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* was launched in October. The review, chaired by former provincial ombudsman Harley Johnson, will focus on protection for persons with disabilities who use any form of assistive animal.

The current act protects the rights of blind persons to carry canes or use guide dogs. It is anticipated that the review will result in expansion of protection to all persons with disabilities, and will include various types of animals and their purposes. Another consideration is consumer protection for those using these specialized animals. The review will also examine various complaint resolution mechanisms.

To ensure Albertans have a voice, the review includes province-wide consultation with persons with disabilities, their families, service providers and

support organizations; the business community, unions and other organizations that may be affected by changes in legislation; animal trainers; educators; law enforcement agencies; and the general public. The consultation will be in two forms, stakeholder round table sessions and written public input. The round table sessions will be held in Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary and Lethbridge. All Albertans wanting input are encouraged to provide their comments in writing by December 7, 2001. A discussion paper and guide can be obtained by phoning (780) 427-4097 or on the Web site at www.cd.gov.ab.ca. Audio versions and TDD/TTY services available.

The Premier's Council will naturally provide input into this important review.

As a reader of *Status Report*, your views are important to us, particularly as we continue to restructure and complete the Alberta Disability Strategy. Please feel free to call or write our office at any time to share your views.

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National Organization Gives Low Grades to Canadian Home Care

Home care by default, not by design.

That's the general assessment in *CARP's Report Card on Home Care in Canada 2001*, which was released in August. The first of its kind in Canada, the report card grades specific home care components.

CARP, the Canadian Association for the Fifty-Plus (formerly Canadian Association for Retired Persons), commissioned Karen Parent and Professor Malcolm Anderson of Queen's University to research and develop the report card as a follow-up to their earlier CARP report on home care, entitled *Putting A Face On Home Care 1999*.

The grading system used in the report card considers change in seven key areas (see chart below) and grades policy at the provincial/territorial level based on whether a policy exists or not for certain aspects of service delivery—and whether policy is under development, under consid-

Key Area	Grading	
Strategic Direction	D	No Change
Funding	C	Insufficient Change
Human Resources	E	Negative Change
Service Delivery	D	No Change
Informal Caregivers	D	No Change
Data	B	Positive Change
Knowledge of Home Care	B	Positive Change

eration or not considered at all.

CARP's mandate is to provide practical recommendations for the issues raised, and in this case, the main recommendation to come out of the report card is that home care must be built by design, not by default. See the sidebar for specific recommendations.

Given the greater centrality of home care within the health care system, it seems certain that more

and more individuals will come into contact with it as patients or caregivers. According to CARP, this means there is therefore urgent need to ensure sufficient support, standards, training, funding—and proper planning.

CARP insists that the Canadian public must be engaged in the development of home care. CARP founder and president, Lillian Morgenthau, expressed concern that adequate public discussion has not occurred regarding the shift to home care and the major responsibility families must assume as caregivers.

"We will send this message to all levels of government, the media and the public with the report card to ensure that home care is effectively implemented," said Morgenthau.

CARP has 400,000 members across the country. Its mandate is to promote the rights and quality of life for the fifty-plus. For more information, call (416) 363-8748 or 1-800-363-9736. The full report and an executive summary can be found at CARP's website (www.50plus.com/carp).

Stroke Treatment Found Effective by U of A Team

Winnipeg-based Medisure Inc. announced in October that independent pre-clinical studies carried out on behalf of the Company at the University of Alberta have demonstrated the protective effect of drug candidate MC-1 in reducing damage associated with ischemic stroke.

Ischemic stroke is damage to the brain caused by a sudden reduction in blood supply, most often due to blood clots lodging in major cerebral arteries. Stroke is a major cause of death and disability in the world with more than 750,000 new cases per year in the USA. To date, the only FDA approved stroke therapeutic is tissue plasminogen activator (TPA), a treatment that aids in dissolving the arterial obstruction. Unfortunately, TPA is typically available to less than 10% of stroke patients, due to the increased risk of hemorrhage and the narrow therapeutic time frame during which the drug can be applied.

The studies were carried out under the direction of Dr. Ashfaq Shuaib, Director of the Division of Neurology at the WC Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre of the University of Alberta. MC-1 reduced infarct size (damaged region) in the brain and preserved neurological function in a rat model of embolic focal ischemia. Preliminary studies also indicate that beneficial effect may be obtained with treatment several hours after the onset of ischemia and that a combination of MC-1 and TPA is also an effective treatment. There was no indication that MC-1 alone increased the incidence of hemorrhage, suggesting it would be a safe treatment for stroke patients. In previous studies, MC-1 has been shown to be able to reduce ischemic injury to the heart.

"We are pleased that we have been able to confirm that the anti-ischemic effects of MC-1 can be extended to stroke injury," stated Dr. Jim Charlton, Medisure's Vice President of Research. "The drug differentiates itself from other treatments in this area in that it is virtually non-toxic and is very well tolerated."

CARP Report Card Recommendations

- The federal and provincial/ territorial governments must develop sustainable funding to support a home care program that meets both acute and chronic needs—and one that is integrated into existing continuing care programs.
- Regional and local authorities must be involved in developing home care.
- The public must be included in the development of home care since they are greatly affected as patients and caregivers.
- National standards, uniformity, and guidelines as well as a common national definition for home care must be established.
- Human resource issues for home care must be addressed immediately in an integrated manner, looking at factors such as compensation, working conditions, training and job satisfaction for paid and family caregivers.

VoicePrint is Here to Stay

VoicePrint—the 24 hour-a-day spoken news service for blind and visually impaired Canadians—is here to stay, thanks to the CRTC.

In a move orchestrated by the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC), every subscriber of a Canadian cable, satellite and microwave television distribution systems pays a penny a month for VoicePrint on their bill. Furthermore, the CRTC now requires VoicePrint to have a permanent home—cable and land-based systems carrying CBC Newsworld and having more than 2,000 subscribers must carry VoicePrint on the Secondary Audio Program (SAP) of Newsworld, while satellite systems broadcast VoicePrint on an audio band—ExpressVu 967; Star Choice 825.

This gives the valuable community service, bringing national, regional, and local news and feature stories to an estimated 500,000 Canadians, some much-needed stability.

“For the first time in its 10-year history, VoicePrint has a permanent home,” says Calgary Bureau Chief Lynne Rach. “In the past, VoicePrint’s channel location has been changed to suit the needs of cable companies, not listeners. The CRTC decision puts VoicePrint listeners in the driver’s seat.”

In addition, VoicePrint is available on the Internet in partnership with Avalanche Networks Corporation (www.shopdome.com/voiceprint). The service streams VoicePrint audio and has a built-in archive capability for those who want to hear something again.

VoicePrint’s success can be attributed largely to the 600 plus volunteers from across Canada who read the current news and information from more than 100 publications, including magazines.

According to Mike Hambly, a blind, paraplegic intake worker at the CNIB, VoicePrint is the gateway to independence for anyone who can’t access the printed word.

“Most people like the feel of the newspaper in their fingers as they sit with their morning coffee,” says the 30-year-old former ranch hand. “I drink my coffee and juice with VoicePrint. Access to information is important. Without it, people can’t live full and productive lives.”

The challenge now, according to Rach, lies in teaching listeners how to find the Secondary Audio Program on Newsworld.

When VoicePrint opened its Calgary bureau on October 26, 1998, Premier Klein was on hand to read a story or two. Today, more than 600 volunteers across the country read news to an estimated 500,000 listeners.

“It gets easier every time I tell someone how to find it,” says Rach. “Often we have a tendency to over-complicate something when technology is involved.”

To receive the SAP on Newsworld, you need three things: basic cable, a stereo TV or VCR, and access to CBC Newsworld.

“If you have those three things, then you should be able to find the SAP—or have a sighted friend or family member find it for you,” says Rach.

“The thing for everyone to remember is that this is a *second* audio channel. The Newsworld picture is still on the screen but when the SAP is turned on, you’ll hear VoicePrint.”

The SAP can be turned on straight from the remote control or from an on-screen menu. Some remotes have a SAP button or MTS button. With each push of the button, the audio signal changes from MONO to STEREO to SAP.

“If you have to resort to the on-screen menu, you may need some help the first few times. But the important thing to remember is that you’re looking for an audio service,” explains Rach.

Here are some general rules to get started (may vary depending on your television or remote):

- Select MENU on the remote
- Once the menu function is activated, find AUDIO.
- Select AUDIO and you will be given three choices: MONO, STEREO or SAP
- Choose SAP

Remember, the Newsworld picture will still be on the screen but if the SAP is turned on, you will hear VoicePrint.

For more information, contact Lynne Rach, Calgary Bureau Chief, VoicePrint, at 403/515-8430.



Digital Textbooks

Academic life for blind or dyslexic students is about to get easier, thanks to Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, a non-profit organization based in Princeton, New Jersey.

The organization has started to record textbooks on CDs that can be played on PC's or on special players. The CDs are a big improvement over audio tapes, since a typical textbook could require as many as a dozen cassettes.

The CDs hold up to 40 hours of recorded text, enough for the average textbook. Instead of a series of beeps to get to a page or a chapter, the student moves through the text by pushing a button (when using the special player) or mouse-clicking (if using on a computer). The special players also allow listeners to speed up the reading without raising the voice pitch to chipmunk levels. Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, which has existed since 1951, is equipping its 32 studios and training staff. It must also work out digital rights arrangements with publishers. New recordings of both old and new textbooks are expected to be available to members of the organization by late next year.

Future plans include enhancing the CDs so that when they're played on a personal computer, they will display text simultaneously, allowing visually impaired students who can still read to follow along with the spoken word.

The organization plans to continue recording audio tape versions, as demand remains strong.

For more information, visit www.rfbd.org.

Free Talking Browser

WeMedia Inc., an American media company that focuses on disability, is offering a free talking web browser for people who have a visual impairment or learning disability.

Different from a screen reader, the WeMedia talking browser becomes the actual browser through which you surf the Net. Complete with large buttons and keystroke commands for easy navigation, the browser "speaks" the text you select.

You can go from link to link using the up and down arrows on your keyboard, and you can either select the text you would like to read, or let the browser read the entire page. There's a helpful tutorial page that can help you get started, and tell you more about how to use the keystroke commands to navigate the browser.

This is the first version of the browser, and WeMedia is asking for user feedback—how it works, how can it be improved to better meet your needs.

Right now, version 1 is only available for people who use personal computers (PCs) on Windows 95, 98, 98 SE, ME, 2000 or NT platforms. This first version of the browser is not compatible with the Mac platform. You'll need a Windows compatible sound card and speakers. You also need Microsoft Internet Explorer, version 4 or above, on your machine. If you use AOL or Netscape, you'll only be able to download this version of the browser if Internet Explorer is already installed on your system. Keep in mind, download time for a 56k modem will be approximately 40 minutes.

This version of WeMedia's talking browser was developed

exclusively for WeMedia Inc. by Customized Computer Software.

WeMedia Inc. is a leading media company covering issues important to the millions of people with disabilities interested in

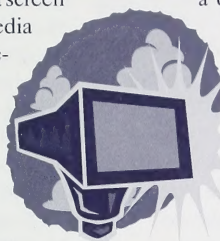
a quality life without compromise. After four decades of extensive work with the disability community, Jerome Belson and Cary Fields established the company in 1997. Both founders are committed to providing in-

creased access to information, products and services to people with disabilities, their families and friends. The company continues to develop a variety of media properties encompassing print, interactive, broadcast, and wireless communications.

Launched in 1997, *WE* magazine is a glossy consumer lifestyle publication that has won critical acclaim for its editorial content and innovative approach to cross-disability issues. Recently renamed WeMedia magazine, the publication was the Official Magazine in North America of the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games and is now available on audiotape for persons who are blind or have low vision through a partnership with The Jewish Guild for the Blind.

In 1999 WeMedia launched its second media property, www.wemedia.com, a comprehensive online resource providing targeted information, products and services. The website concentrates on news, sports, accessible and assistive technologies, politics and advocacy, shopping, employment, education, finance, and real estate from a disability perspective.

To find the talking browser, visit www.wemedia.com and follow the relevant links.



Hearing Aid Company Charged

Alberta Government Services has charged a Saskatchewan-based hearing aid company with 20 counts of committing unfair practices. The first appearance is scheduled for a Drumheller courtroom today, Friday, Sept. 28.

The company, 848240 Alberta Ltd., operated under at least 12 names including Calgary Hearing Associates, Edmonton Hearing Associates, Red Deer Hearing Associates, The Hearing Associates and The Hearing Associates Canada. The company's principal director and shareholder, Curtis Malinowski, was also charged.

848240 Alberta Ltd. allegedly misled consumers, all of them seniors, into believing they required hearing aids when they did not and misled consumers into believing Alberta Health and Wellness endorsed the company's product.

The company operated throughout Alberta, primarily in smaller communities. Some seniors received a notice advising them of an appointment for a hearing test and felt obligated to attend. After the test, the seniors were told they needed a hearing aid and the company's product was sold to them. The company charged about \$5,000 for each set of hearing aids.

Some of the invoices issued by the company indicated a refund from the Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) program, administered by Alberta Health and Wellness. However, no such refund was given. To access the AADL program, eligible clients must obtain medical clearance from a family physician.

Alberta Government Services received 23 written complaints from seniors who purchased a hearing aid from the company. Consumers considering buying a hearing aid should:

- consult their family doctor;
- determine whether the business has a permanent business location;
- obtain references from friends and family; and
- ask about the product's warranty.

Consumers who have concerns or questions about this company are invited to call the province's Consumer Information Centre at 1-877-427-4088.

Hard of Hearing?

The Edmonton Chapter of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association urges people who are hard of hearing to become involved and work together toward achieving positive changes for yourself and your community.

The Association holds meetings at Thibodeau's Centre for Hearing Health and Communication (12310 - 105 Street) the first Monday of each month. Parking is at the rear of the building, and you can enter the back door. The next meeting is November 5th at 7:00 PM—phone 780/447-9233 for more information.

Callahan's QUADS! Wins Festival's Top Prize

John Callahan's *QUADS!*, a controversial animated cartoon that takes a darkly humorous look at disability, took the top award at the first annual Picture This... film and video festival.

The festival, featuring works produced by or about people with disabilities, was held in Calgary Oct. 19 to 21.

The series took the festival's top honour—best overall picture—and the PTA Award in its category for the outstanding entry that involves a disabled producer, writer or director.

"Overall, our jury liked this over other programs because it is so irreverent, and 'in your face'," explains Festival Director Vern Reynolds-Braun. "The characters in this animated 1/2 hour program don't apologize for their disabilities, they shout about them! We received over 100 en-

tries to our festival, from around the world. Many fine programs. However, our jury was most appreciative of works that just couldn't be classified as traditional disability fare, and this is certainly not traditional."

The central character is Reilly, a quirky quadriplegic who lives under the same roof as a host of other politically incorrect characters who call themselves "the Magnificent Severed" and spend their half-hour time slot mocking everything the able-bodied world finds sacred.

Written by award-winning cartoonist John Callahan, the show airs weekdays on Teletoon, the Canadian cartoon-only channel. But this is no ordinary run-of-the-mill cartoon—Callahan, a quadriplegic who lives in Port-



land, Oregon, has given the series a distinct dark side that has resulted in a following of both fans and critics.

For example, in the first episode, Riley exclaims in the middle of a group therapy session, "I'm not having trouble, I'm not differently abled, I'm freakin' paralyzed! This isn't a special challenge, it's—it's a goddamn tragedy! I can't walk!"

Given its controversial sub-

ject matter, it's no surprise the show airs at 11:30 PM (weekdays only), and it isn't likely to show up on primetime any time soon. To date, no American networks has touched it, although European and Australian broadcasters have joined Teletoon in buying the series.

The show was also nominated for "Best Comedy Program or Series" and "Best Direction in a Comedy Program or Series" in Canada's Gemini Awards, scheduled for late October.

QUADS! is produced in Toronto by the Corus Entertainment-owned Nelvana animation house.

Callahan is also the creator and executive producer of *Pelwick*, a sort of kids' version of *QUADS!* which airs weekly on CBC.

Calgary Festival a "First for Canada"

In what organizers describe as a first for Canada, a disability film and video festival was held October 19 to 21st at Fort Calgary.

Picture This..., which will be held annually, was a three day film and video festival for, by and about persons with disabilities. Largely a volunteer effort of persons with disabilities, their friends, allies and support people, Picture This... was a non-profit event, initiated by the Calgary Scope Society.

Films and videos featured in the festival focused on some area of disability culture, or were of any subject matter as long as they were produced, directed and/or written by a person or persons with a disability. Entries in English were welcomed from around the world, and were screened by a panel of judges. All entries were listed in a program, and attendees could screen any of the entries by requesting a copy during the festival for viewing in a private booth.

Goals of the festival were to encourage the disability community in Calgary to attend and feel good about what they see, hear and experience—and to connect with disability communities in other places around North America and the world. Naturally, the broader community in Calgary was also invited to attend.

One of the driving forces behind Picture This... is Calgary television producer Vern Reynolds-Braun, who is now the Festival Director.

"I was working part-time doing some video storytelling work-

shops with a group of people with disabilities, organized through Calgary Scope Society, and we quite often mentioned the fact that there are a lot of very good stories about disability and about persons with disabilities that don't get out to a large audience," explains Reynolds-Braun. "We thought, 'Why not have a film and video festival on disability and invited entries from anywhere?' Well, that soon turned into some seed funding from The Calgary Foundation and several thousand hours of work from a dedicated group of people."

Reynolds-Braun says that, although the inaugural festival occurred just weeks ago, the call for entries for the 2002 festival is now out (deadline is June 30, 2002). He adds that the organizers will soon announce the ASISTED Production Resource Fund (Artist Support for Inspired Story Telling about Experiences of Disability). This fund, administered by Calgary SCOPE Society, will pledge \$10,000 worth of camera time and editing suite time to acceptable applicants who have great stories on disability to tell. Future plans the ASISTED fund include a mentorship program and a capital program as a way for worthy applicants to access funds for productions that tell great stories on disability.

For more information, please contact Vern Reynolds-Braun, Festival Director by e-mail (director@picturethisfestival.org) or visit www.picturethisfestival.org.

\$20 Million Allotted for Senior's Housing

To address the growing demand for seniors' supportive housing, the Alberta government has targeted \$20 million for the development of new units under the Healthy Aging Partnership Initiative.

The \$20 million is available in this fiscal year for management bodies and private, non-profit organizations to fund new supportive housing projects, or to modify existing projects to accommodate aging in place for low and moderate-income seniors.

"This year's initiative builds on the success of the 1999-2000 HAPI program that allocated \$10 million in grants and, in combination with \$10 million in allocated funds from the 2001-2002 program, will result in over 600 new supportive housing units being developed in 26 communities," said Seniors Minister Stan Woloshyn.

These communities are Lethbridge, Dunmore, Brooks, Medicine Hat, Claresholm, Okotoks, High River, Didsbury, Red Deer, Eckville, Olds, Lacombe, Sylvan Lake, Daysland, Hinton, Evansburg, Wetaskiwin, Morinville, Westlock, Vegreville, Fairview, Grande Prairie, Falher, High Prairie, Fort McMurray and Fort Vermilion.

In addition, the 2000-2001 Seniors Supportive Housing Incentive Program allocated \$10 million and will result in 517 new supportive housing units and 113 conversions being developed in 14 communities throughout the province. These locations include Grande Prairie, Thorhild, Falher, Fairview, Barrhead, Bonnyville, Edmonton, Wetaskiwin, Stettler, Evansburg, Red Deer, Calgary,

Okotoks and Claresholm.

"Through these two programs, we have committed approximately \$50 million over three years towards addressing the supportive housing needs of Albertans," said Woloshyn. "Only by partnering with management bodies and private, non-profit organizations, are we able to foster community-based solutions to seniors housing challenges."

The program, which was previously administered by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, was transferred to the Ministry of Seniors in March of this year along with a \$31.7 million budget, of which approximately \$20 million remains unallocated and available for this year. Whereas 1999-2000 funding was allocated to each health authority based upon the region's residing senior population, funds from the 2001 program are being allocated directly to management bodies and private, non-profit stakeholder organizations based upon the greatest demonstrated need.

Two government-wide studies, the *Long Term Care Review* and the *Study on the Impact of the Aging Population*, recognize that the majority of Alberta's seniors favour aging in place for as long as possible. For seniors who do not require the services of a long term care facility, supportive housing promotes residents' independence and aging in place through the provision of services such as 24-hour monitoring, emergency response, meal preparation, housekeeping, life enrichment activities, security, social interaction, as well as personal and health care services.

Help for Disabled Women Entrepreneurs

Are you a woman with a disability looking for assistance and direction to start your own business? The DAWning Opportunities: Transition to Self-Employment project may be for you.

Through partnerships with a number of networks across the country including ILRCs (Independent Living Resource Centres), and with funds provided by the federal government's Opportunities Fund, DAWN Canada has hired a National Project Coordinator and five regional brokers to deliver this program.

Brokers will be providing one-on-one self-employment counselling to those participants who wish to challenge the current labour market conditions for employment and create their own businesses within Canada.

To be eligible to participate, women must self-identify as having a disability and not be eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) benefits. Limited financial assistance is available for project participants to offset expenses in childcare, transportation and attendant care services.

For more information, please contact the National Project Coordinator, Barbara Anello, at 705/494-9078 or e-mail anello@dawnCanada.net.

Students with Disabilities Join Online

The CampusNet Project is an initiative which will expand the resources offered on the web site of the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS). This project is funded through the Office of Learning Technologies, Human Resources Development Canada.

The goal of CampusNet is to create a uniquely Canadian online collaborative community. It will bring together disability-related campus-based organizations, associations, committees, and groups. The objective is to create a virtual community of learning where information on campus-based issues, projects, and activities that affect students with disabilities can be shared and discussed across the country. In addition to providing a means of communicating between groups, CampusNet will help these groups create their own web page in the community. All of this information will be provided online and free to everyone.

If you are a Canadian college or university disability-related organization, association, committee, or group, NEADS would like to hear from you. If you are aware of such a group and/or committee on your campus, please pass this notice on to them.

Groups interested in becoming part of the CampusNet community can contact the CampusNet Project Consultant, Chris Gaulin, by e-mail (campusnet@neads.ca) or by telephone (toll-free at 877/670-1256).

Each group will be asked to complete a short telephone interview. The interview will guide NEADS as it designs and builds this community.

For more information about NEADS and its work, visit the organization's web site at <http://www.neads.ca> or e-mail its National Coordinator, Frank Smith, at info@neads.ca.

Mental Health: A Worldwide Crisis?

One in four will be affected by mental disorders worldwide, according to the United Nations' World Health Organization

In a recently released report, the World Health Organization (WHO) says that one in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives, and that around 450 million people currently suffer from such conditions, placing mental disorders among the leading causes of ill-health and disability worldwide.

And while treatments are available, nearly two-thirds of people with a known mental disorder never seek help from a health professional. Stigma, discrimination and neglect prevent treatment from reaching people with mental disorders. Where there is neglect, there is little or no understanding. Where there is no understanding, there is neglect.

In the report, entitled *New Understanding, New Hope*, the United Nations' health agency seeks to break this vicious cycle and urges governments to seek solutions for mental health that are already available and affordable. Governments should move away from large mental institutions and towards community health care, and integrate mental health care into primary health care and the general health care system, says WHO.

"Mental illness is not a personal failure. In fact, if there is failure, it is to be found in the way we have responded to people with mental and brain disorders," said Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General of WHO, on releasing the World Health Report. "I hope this report will dispel long-held doubts and dogma and mark the beginning of a new public health era in the field of mental health."

A lack of urgency, misinfor-

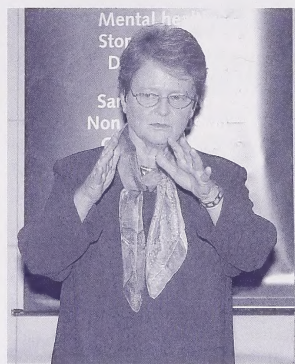
mation, and competing demands are blinding policy-makers from taking stock of a situation where mental disorders figure among the leading causes of disease and disability in the world, says WHO. Depressive disorders are already the fourth leading cause of the global disease burden. They are expected to rank second by 2020, behind ischaemic heart disease but ahead of all other diseases.

The report invites governments to make strategic decisions and choices in order to bring about positive change in the acceptance and treatment of mental disorders. The report says some mental disorders can be prevented; most mental and behavioural disorders can be successfully treated; and that much of this prevention, cure and treatment is affordable. Despite the chronic and long-term nature of some mental disorders, with the proper treatment, people suffering from mental disorders can live productive lives and be a vital part of their communities. Over 80% of people with schizophrenia can be free of relapses at the end of one year of treatment with anti-psychotic drugs combined with family intervention. Up to 60% of people with depression can recover with a proper combination of antidepressant drugs and psychotherapy. Up to 70% of people with epilepsy can be seizure free when treated with simple, inexpensive anti-convulsants.

The responsibility for action lies with governments, says WHO. Currently, more than 40% of countries have no mental health policy and over 30% have no mental health program. Around 25% of countries have no

mental health legislation.

The magnitude of mental health burden is not matched by the size and effectiveness of the



"In fact, if there is failure, it is to be found in the way we have responded to people with mental and brain disorders."

—Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland

response it demands. Currently, more than 33% of countries allocate less than 1% of their total health budgets to mental health, with another 33% spending just 1% of their budgets on mental health. A limited range of medicines is sufficient to treat the majority of mental disorders. About 25% of countries, however, do not have the three most commonly prescribed drugs used to treat schizophrenia, depression and epilepsy at the primary health care level. There is only one psychiatrist per 100,000 people in over half the countries in the world, and 40% of countries have less than one hospital bed reserved for mental disorders per 10,000 people.

The poor often bear the greater burden of mental disorders, both in terms of risk in having a mental disorder and lack of access to treatment. Constant exposure to severely stressful events, dangerous living conditions, exploita-

tion, and poor health in general all contribute to the greater vulnerability of the poor. The lack of access to affordable treatment makes the course of the illness more severe and debilitating, leading to a vicious circle of poverty and mental health disorders that is rarely broken.

The report says new knowledge can have a tremendous impact on how individuals, societies and the public health community deal with mental disorders. We now know that large mental institutions no longer represent the best option for patients and families. Such institutions lead to a loss of social skills, excessive restriction, human rights violations, dependency, and reduced opportunities for rehabilitation. Countries should move towards setting up community care alternatives in a planned manner, ensuring that such alternatives are in place even as institutions are being phased out.

"Science, ethics and experience point to clear paths to follow. In the face of this knowledge, a failure to act will reflect a lack of commitment to address mental health problems," said Dr. Benedetto Saraceno, Director of WHO's Mental Health and Substance Dependence department.

The policy directions have never been so clear, says WHO. Governments who are just starting to address mental health will need to set priorities. Choices must be made among a large number of services and a wide range of prevention and promotion strategies. WHO's message is that every country, no matter what its resource constraints, can do something to improve the mental health of its people. What it requires is the courage and the commitment to take the necessary steps.

The report is part of a year-long campaign on mental health. For the first time, multiple events at WHO, including its premier report, technical discussions at the World Health Assembly and World Health Day, have all focused on one topic: mental health.

New Alliance Formed to Promote Golf for People with Disabilities

In late July, representatives of some leading American golf organizations formed an alliance to promote better access to the sport for people with disabilities.

In total, fifteen people got together at the University of Indiana to form the alliance, including USGA President Trey Holland; Rick Martino, PGA Director of Instruction; Henry Thrower, Director of Special Programs for the PGA; Betsy Clark, LPGA Director of Education and Research; and Mike Tinkey, Deputy Executive Director of the National Golf Course Owners Association.

According to Gary Robb, an associate professor in the department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at Indiana University, the announcement of the alliance is the culmination of eight years of hard work.

"In 1993, Indiana University's National Center on Accessibility and Clemson University's Project on Accessible Golf convened the first of six National Forum on Accessible Golf meetings," explains Robb, who will head up the alliance. "These meetings brought together the diverse interests of both the golf and disabled communities to discuss face to face the issue, concerns, perceptions, etc. Over the years, these meetings directly or indirectly resulted in substantial input into the U.S. Access Board's guidelines for construction and alteration of golf courses to accommodate players with disabilities, meetings with the U.S. Department of Justice to discuss programmatic accessibility issues related to golf, and a number of other activities and studying that have advanced the issues forward. The 'Alliance' is a result of all of that and especially is a result of the 6th Forum that was held in April of 2001 at

Clemson University. All involved—golf organizations, organizations serving people with disabilities and golfers with disabilities—realized that there needed to be a national united voice to move us all ahead together."

Robb adds that it's the first time golf's major sanctioning groups have agreed to work together in accommodating the disabled and encouraging people with disabilities to play golf.

"Their involvement," he says, "is central and essential to us moving forward on making the game of golf more accessible to all."

One priority of the alliance will be to provide an information kit for course owners and operators—what their responsibilities are in terms of providing instruction and equipment. Other priorities include the development of comprehensive instructional programs for teachers, golf professionals, therapists and new golfers with disabilities.

At the moment, Robb says the initiative includes only U.S. organizations, but that having the CPGA join and use the combined resources of the alliance seems like a good idea.

"This would certainly seem to be something that we could consider," says Robb. "Perhaps when we get on our feet, the Leadership Council would entertain such a proposal from the CPGA."

Braden Hirsch, a Canadian Paraplegic Association staff member and an enthusiastic cart golfer, says it's a golden opportunity for the CPGA and the Canadian golf industry.

"This is a very important development," says Hirsch. "A number of golf courses now have purchased or been provided with accessible carts, but the numbers of people using these adapted carts continues to be small. This is largely because there's no one at the courses to instruct or teach disabled golfers. Club pros don't feel that they have the skills to teach golf to someone who requires some adaptations."

"If you think about it, most new golfers take a few lessons and go to a driving range. They then start to golf on the course. For persons with disabilities, they have to do it on their own! They have no one to model or provide instruction to them. In Canada, we need to promote and partner with our neighbours to the south. For adapted golf to grow in Canada, we need to have the local club pros promoting the game for persons with disabilities. The CPGA is their association, and if the CPGA buys in, hopefully the local club pros will follow."

Limbaugh Says He's Going Deaf

America's most infamous talk radio show host, Rush Limbaugh, dropped a bombshell on his audience in October, admitting that he has gone almost completely deaf over the past six months.

"I can't communicate with people," he said. "I can occasionally talk to people in person, one to one. But I can't hear radio. I can't hear television. I can't hear music. My left ear is completely shot, and I've lost 80 per cent of my hearing in the right. If the pattern keeps up, I will be entirely deaf."

Limbaugh said he first realized he had a problem at the end of May, when he lost hearing in his left ear.

Doctors have diagnosed a rare condition known as auto-immune inner ear disease, AIED.

Limbaugh, who is 50 years old, made a career out of baiting former President Bill Clinton and America's liberal community. His core audience, known to friend and foe alike as "ditto heads", is drawn largely from an angry white male constituency.

In July he signed a nine-year \$259 million deal to syndicate his show to over 600 stations across America, the richest contract in the history of radio. Limbaugh and his syndication company, Premier Networks, both insist they didn't know the extent of his condition when the deal was signed, though both appear committed to seeing it fulfilled.

The day after making the announcement, Limbaugh says he received more than 30,000 emails and countless phone calls.

Braden Hirsch tees one up on the range during a recent tournament in Calgary.

(photo courtesy CPA Alberta)



Book Demystifies Self Managed Care

If you believe in the concept of self-managed care but are having a hard time getting the handle on the process, there's help on the way.

Caregivers And Personal Assistants: How To Find, Hire And Manage The People Who Help You (Or Your Loved One!), is hailed as a "a bible for people who must depend on others to get through the day."

People who need the skills to hire and manage help providers include those with disabilities and, ironically, overworked family caregivers who desperately need relief help. Until now, learning these skills has been very difficult, with people largely resorting to trial and error.

An author and professional, who has lived with a disability and required daily assistance from providers for over 30 years, now comes to the rescue with a reference book of "how to" strategies. While other books have explored the emotional aspects of caregiving or provided nursing techniques for aides to use, this new book is unique. *Caregivers and Personal Assistants: How to Find, Hire and Manage the People Who Help You (Or Your Loved One!)* shows people who need help how to find quality help providers, whenever and wherever they are needed, and keep them longer.

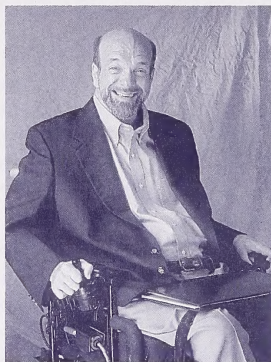
The book recognizes the importance of family caregivers. In the U.S., the National Family Caregivers Association estimates that 26% of adult Americans—about 54 million people—have provided caregiver services to loved ones within the last year.

Caregivers and Personal Assistants... is a comprehensive, indexed, step-by-step reference that teaches help recipients (as well as family caregivers and health care agencies) the time-proven strategies for

recruiting, interviewing, hiring, training, managing, and parting from help providers. People who learn these special management skills can better control the quality of help they receive, because they can first control the quality of their help providers. Special chapters also teach family caregivers how to avoid chronic fatigue, and reserve family time and energy for providing love, caring, and support.

The author is a leading authority because of his decades of personal, professional, and academic experience as well as his widespread sharing of management strategies through seminars, courses, and publications. For more than 30 years, Alfred H. "Skip" DeGraff, a quadriplegic who uses motorized wheelchair mobility (after a diving injury at age 18), has been dependent each day on help providers. While completing graduate school and pursuing professional careers, he has personally employed over 350 personal assistants (PAs) after interviewing over 1,500 applicants. He has also provided one-on-one counselling to help recipients, family caregivers, and paid providers; taught formal 16-week courses on PA management; hosted magazine columns; and now authored this third, completely revised edition of his reference. In addition to offering his new book, DeGraff invites readers to subscribe to a free e-newsletter at saratoga-publications.com.

Caregivers and Personal Assistants... will be available in March 2002 for \$37.95 (Cdn) in major bookstores. For more information, e-mail mailbox@saratoga-publications.com or visit www.saratoga-publications.com.



Author Al DeGraff

Book Describes Alternative MS Treatments

Alternative Medicine and Multiple Sclerosis is being hailed as a single source for accurate and unbiased information on a wide range of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) approaches that can aid both in the management of MS.

The book offers information on the relevance, safety, and effectiveness of various alternative therapies, such as acupuncture, biofeedback, yoga, special diets, and herbal medicine.

Author Allen C. Bowling, M.D., Ph.D., has organized the therapies alphabetically so that readers can readily pinpoint a specific treatment and learn

about its origins, merits, and possible uses in MS.

Readers will be able to:

- find unconventional options that may provide symptomatic relief when conventional therapies are limited
- learn about potentially dangerous interactions between CAM therapies and medical treatments for MS
- identify CAM therapies that are possibly effective, low risk, and inexpensive
- recognize ineffective or dangerous alternative therapies.

According to surveys conducted by the Rocky Mountain MS Center and the National MS

Society (United States), most people with MS can use some form of CAM, generally without guidance from their physicians.

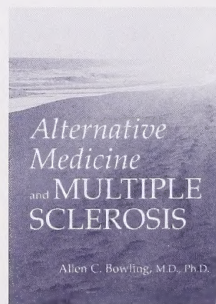
"Organized in a user friendly format, the topics are grouped in logical categories. In addition, references are provided, encouraging further exploration. Highly recommended for people with MS, their families, and their health-care providers," wrote Nancy Holland, head of Clinical Programs at the National MS So-

ciety, in a recent review.

The book is published by Demos Medical Publishing Inc.,

a New York-based company dedicated to publications for health care professionals and individuals and affected by a range of neurologic and related disorders: MS, epilepsy, Parkinson's, ALS, head injury, and sleep disorders.

Contact the company by phone (800/532-8663), e-mail (orderdept@demospub.com) or visit www.demosmedpub.com.



A Special Trust

When Leonard Henson died and left his estate to his daughter Audrey more than a decade ago, he probably had no idea it would take a court decision to ensure that his daughter continue to receive Ontario Disability Support Payments (ODSP).

In an effort to bypass a government rule stipulating that once a person with disability receives an asset, their benefits are reduced or eliminated, Henson's lawyer created an absolute discretionary trust. This meant that the money in the trust would be paid out at the discretion of the designated trustee, not the beneficiary—the child did not own these assets. Despite this significant detail, the government challenged the trust on the grounds that the Guelph, Ont. woman did in fact own an asset and was now ineligible for her total disability benefits.

The Hensons went to court to fight the government's decision and won based on the ruling that an absolute discretionary trust preserves the right of a child with disabilities to receive benefits. (A subsequent appeal by the government was dismissed.) And so the absolute discretionary trust—nicknamed the "Henson" trust in Ontario—was popularized as a strategy for parents to ensure their children with disabilities have access to their estate without losing their disability support payments.

For Paul Cuddy, a financial advisor with Great Pacific Management Co. Ltd. in Toronto, the absolute discretionary trust is a necessary part of any discussion with clients who have a child with a disability. "The reality is that they may spend several hours each day bathing their child," he says. "On top of this strain, they worry about how to continue this care when they die. They need to

know their options."

Cuddy, who works with a network of lawyers and accountants to help clients set up absolute discretionary trusts, says that they are an "effective advisor tool for dealing with disability planning," and not used nearly enough.

This is mostly because many lawyers aren't aware of the details of the "Henson" case, says Kenneth Pope, an Ottawa-based lawyer. "Lawyers look up 'disability' in the precedents manuals and create a trust arrangement that's simply structured to help a child with a disability," he says. "What these precedents don't take into account is that the trust needs to be worded so the child is deemed not to have received the inheritance personally and therefore can still receive benefits."

Also called a non-vesting clause, this wording is crucial to properly setting up an absolute discretionary trust, says Pope. "Unfortunately, not many lawyers are aware of how important this wording is," he says. "The client has to come right out and say that the asset they are passing on doesn't vest in the beneficiary, that the child will not legally own this asset"

An absolute discretionary trust makes sense for many parents who are caring for children with special needs. Not only does it allow the child to continue receiving benefits but there aren't any restrictions on how much can go into the trust or how it can be used for the child. Still, there are other options that should be considered.

"A Disability Expenses Trust is a vehicle that is put in place to receive an inheritance of up to \$100,000 without impacting ODSP benefits," says Cuddy. But a Disability Expenses Trust not only limits the assets that can be held without affecting benefits to \$100,000, it also stipulates that

the funds be used only for expenses directly related to the child's disability, such as a wheelchair, or specialized medical care.

Clients can also elect to use the Preferred Beneficiary Election (PBE) to apply to have the funds in the trust taxed in the beneficiary's name to take advantage of a lower tax rate.

What if the parents don't have an estate to leave to their child? "This is often the case," says Ray Ridgway, a financial advisor at Argosy Private Client Group in Ottawa. "These families use their resources today to create the best lifestyle for the person with the disability," he says.

For these clients, Ridgway says there are two options: saving money, which can be a slow process, or purchasing life insurance. "My advice is to buy a life insurance policy, payable on the last death and it'll pay out to the child and the parent can relax and spend their money," he says.

If there was one misconception surrounding financial planning for children with special needs it's the notion that RRSPs and RRIFs can be transferred tax-free into a trust for the child. "That's a myth that surrounds this issue," says Ridgway. "The only way registered funds can be transferred to a child with disabilities tax-free is if the parent can prove the child is completely financially dependent, and that means they have absolutely no income coming in." Since most children with a disability receive some form of benefits, these registered funds are considered an asset in their name. "Even if a parent shelters the funds in a Henson trust, the RRSPs are deemed to have been collapsed and taxes are charged," he says.

That said, an absolute discretionary trust remains the most effective method for a parent to ensure their child is taken care of when they die. But remember that these clients are looking for more than a financial safety net. "Most parents are not that concerned about finding a trustee that will give their child money,"

says John Dowson, president of LifeTRUST Planning, a Newmarket, Ont.-based firm that offers total life planning for families who have children with a disability. "These parents are really looking for someone to take their child to McDonald's or to a movie."

While this emotional factor is what makes advising clients who have a child with a disability especially challenging, the key to success is making sure that all angles are covered. "There's so much more to this than doing a will and a trust agreement," says Dowson. "You need a life plan, a financial plan and a legal plan. One doesn't work without the other two."

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Is the Henson Trust applicable in Alberta?

That's the question we posed to Kenneth Pope, the Ottawa-based lawyer quoted in the above article. Here is his response:

"The Henson case law is only settled in Ontario, in the sense that the case was heard and upheld on appeal. It would need to be heard and upheld in Alberta for the matter to be clearly settled, but by looking at the case law in England and all other common law jurisdictions, I am unable to see how it would not be successfully upheld in the other common law provinces. I understand from speaking with another expert in this field that Alberta (AISH) is endeavouring to provide that Henson trusts are no different than other trusts, which is a nice thing to do bureaucratically but won't be doable if challenged, in my opinion. This is exactly what happened in Ontario in 1987 and 1989, and the result will be same in Alberta."

CCRD Takes on VIA Rail and Air Canada

A prominent Canadian disability organization has filed serious complaints against two of Canada's national passenger carriers.

The Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD), a national non-profit advocacy organization of people with disabilities, is taking on Air Canada and VIA Rail.

CCD is condemning VIA Rail's purchase of 139 Night-stock cars from Alstom, a French company which originally built the cars for the "Chunnel" connecting England and France. The cars, says CCD, are narrower than those currently in use in Canada, and the result is that they are largely inaccessible.

In an August 20th media statement, CCD representatives pulled no punches: "This purchase by VIA ignored the needs of people with disabilities. Although (Transportation) Minister Collette promised any new rolling stock would be accessible, VIA chose to ignore this commitment even though the Government of Canada provided \$130 million dollars for upgrading rolling stock...VIA's actions have caused CCD to spend \$45,000 in legal fees just to ensure that the Canadian Transportation Agency's jurisdiction is not undermined. VIA, on the other hand, used taxpayers' money to undermine the interests of people with disabilities. VIA appears to feel no shame in using its substantial public resources to deprive Canadians of their right to access."

In the Air Canada case, CCD's complaint pertains to the airline's decision to replace accessible aircraft with inaccessible

aircraft on some routes.

"One example, which we fear is indicative of things to come, is on the Gander, Newfoundland-St. John's, Newfoundland route," said a CCD representative in the media statement. "Air Nova has replaced a previously accessible passenger airline service, using DASH 8 aircraft, with an inaccessible service, using Beech 1900 aircraft. With the DASH 8 service, persons with disabilities using mobility aids were able to travel and have their mobility aids transported by the carrier. The configuration and size of the Beech 1900 aircraft makes it unusable by many people with mobility disabilities. Air Nova's decision to replace the DASH 8 with the Beech 1900 was made for reasons of operational convenience and economic benefit for the airline."

CCD has filed formal complaints against Air Canada and VIA Rail with the Canadian Transportation Agency.

Background information on the VIA Rail and Air Nova claims is available at the CCD website (www.pcs.mb.ca/~ccd/).



ALS Patient Donates \$5 Million to Research

Michael Halls, a Canadian who has lived with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) since 1997, has made a donation in excess of \$5 million dollars for ALS research.

"I am very excited about it and know it will do some good," says Halls. "This is an insidious, deadly disease. The more public awareness there is, the more people are going to contribute toward finding a cure."

This donation will benefit ALS research being conducted at The John P. Robarts Research Institute and the Lawson Health Research Institute, the research arm of London Health Sciences Centre. This donation will create the Michael Halls Centre for ALS Research and support the Centre's infrastructure and equipment.

"Michael Halls' gift is a tremendous boost for ALS research," says Dr. Mark Poznansky, President and Scientific Director of The John P. Robarts Research Institute. "His donation will enable Dr. Strong, a leading expert in ALS, to explore new avenues of discovery and forge collaborations with other scientists within Robarts and London Health Sciences Centre that could shed more light on the complexities of this devastating disease."

ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, is a neuromuscular disease. ALS is characterized by a progressive degeneration of motor nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. When the motor neurons can no longer send impulses to the muscles, the muscles begin to waste away, causing increased muscle weakness. ALS is often referred to as a syndrome, because the disease becomes apparent in various patterns. Currently, there is no cure for ALS.

Guide Dog Leads Man from World Trade Tower

Mike Hingson, an American businessman who is blind, was led by his dog Roselle to safety from the 78th floor of the World Trade Tower on September 11th.

A story of Hingson and Roselle appeared in the October 14th issue of Vancouver's *The Province* newspaper.

"Was it miraculous that we got out? Sure. But to say that Roselle saved my life in some incredible way that makes her just the most amazing dog that ever walked the face of the Earth would be negating what the dogs are doing at Ground Zero, sniffing out bodies, or what any police dog does and any other guide dog does," Hingson told *The Province*.

Hingson was in Vancouver to attend a guide dog forum. Ironically, the hotel where the forum was originally booked refused to allow guide dogs inside, so the event was moved to the Burnaby Hilton.

